Nixon's Tricky Non-Withdrawal Policy, P. 3

The Biggest Nothing In History

The country doesn't know it yet but it has created a monster, a monster in the form of millions of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence, and who have been given the chance to die for the biggest nothing in history; men who have returned with a sense of anger, and a sense of betrayal which no one has yet grasped.

—John Kerry, leader of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, before Senate Foreign Relations Committee April 22.

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Peace Is Still A Long, Long March Away

After the Inquisition made Galileo recant the subversive notion that the earth revolves around the sun, he is said to have whispered, defiantly, "Eppur si muove!" (but still it moves). In the euphoric wake of the huge anti-war gathering here on April 24, one can only paraphrase Galileo and say of the government, "But still it doesn't move!" There will be no peace in Vietnam until we get rid of Nixon as we got rid of Johnson. But the chances are slight that Nixon's successor will not be somebody like Muskie or Humphrey who will carry on the tactical retreat Johnson began. That retreat is designed to appease anti-war sentiment by withdrawing most, and if necessary all, of our troops from South Vietnam but to maintain a satellite regime in Saigon, supported by airpower from the Seventh fleet and Thailand. The aim is still the maintenance of U.S. power in East Asia as part of the Pax Americana. There can be no generation of peace until we somehow curb the militarism and imperialism which gave us Vietnam and will create new Vietnams. But the Pentagon is already utilizing the reduction in the cost of the Vietnam war to give it funds for a leaner but better equipped force with which to go on playing the world policeman role. Yet the dominant elements of both parties decry anti-imperialism as a return to isolationism.

Mostly Young, White and Middle Class

From the top of Capitol Hill, the marchers looked like a mass of brightly colored human confetti as far as the eye could see up Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues. It took five hours for the last of the demonstrators to come within hearing range of the speakers, and more bus and train loads were still pouring into town when the demonstration was half over in mid-afternoon. No one expected so huge a turnout, perhaps the biggest since the Civil Rights March of 1963. The peace movement has risen bigger than ever, from the ashes of Vietnamization and withdrawal. But it still has a long, hard way to go. Though sedately dressed older persons were visible amid the brightly colored rags that are chic with today's youth, the crowd was still overwhelmingly the other side of 30. There was a trainload of 1500 from District 65, many busloads from New York's hospital workers (Local 1199), some UAW and Teamsters, but these were fringe elements long opposed to the war; clearly the organized labor movement, rank-and-file as well as leadership, is still wedded to the military-industrial complex by bread-and-butter as well as ideology. The Third World contingent was far less than one percent of the 300,000 or more who turned out. These, despite the favorite sterotypes of the Far Left, were overwhelmingly white and middle class. There is a lot of missionary work to be done, in the ghettoes and out in the country.

The stars of this year's demonstration were the Vietnam Veterans Against The War. The drama associated with their four day encampment on the Mall touched the heart of the country and was mainly responsible in my opinion for the unexpected size of the turnout. They stared down the Attorney General of the United States in an episode without parallel in the history of American constitutional law. He went to court to obtain an injunction forbidding them to sleep on the Mall, and then after winning a victory from Chief Justice Burger and later the entire court, lost his nerve and went back to the District Judge who issued the original order and asked him to reverse it!

The failure of nerve is understandable. I can remember as a young newspaperman what happened after Herbert Hoover called out the troops to drive the tattered Bonus Marchers, who were also veterans, out of town in 1932; that was the biggest mistake he made. If police or troops had driven the VVAW out the night after the Supreme Court decision, it would have been the biggest mistake Nixon ever made. Pictures of legless veterans being carried out of the park could have precipitated riots in military encampments here and in Vietnam. Scores of men in the nearby 82d Airborne Division, which would have been called up, sent word that they would join the vets rather than act against them. Contingents of active troops from Ft. Bragg, Ft. Meade, Ft. Belvoir and Andrews Air Force Base turned up at the various affairs associated with the VVAW encampment: the candle-light procession around the White House, the parade of veterans throwing away their medals at the Capitol, the Memorial Service for the Dead at Washington

(Continued on Page Four)

One Of The "Best" Defends Agnew's "Misfits"

In 1970 at West Point Vice President Agnew said "some glamorize the criminal misfits of society while our best men die in Asian rice paddies to preserve the freedom which most of these misfits abuse." This is a terrible distortion because we in no way consider ourselves the best men of this country, because those he calls misfits were standing up for us in a way that nobody else in this country dared to, because so many who have died would have returned to this country to join the misfits in their effort to ask for an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam, because so many of those best men have returned as quadriplegics and amputees, and they lie forgotten in the VA hospitals, and we cannot consider ourselves America's best men when we are ashamed of, and hate, what we were called on to do in Southeast Asia. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life in Vietnam, by linking such loss to the preservation of freedom which these misfits supposedly abuse, is to us the height of criminal hypocrisy, that kind of hypocrisy which we feel has torn the country apart.

—Kerry of the VVAW testifying on April 22 (abr).

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"To Search Out And Destroy The Last Vestiges of This Barbaric War"

By John Forbes Kerry*

In our opinion, and from our experience, there is nothing in South Vietnam that realistically threatens the United States of America. Many of the men who have returned to this country are probably angriest about all we were told about the mythical war against Communism. We found most people didn't know the difference between communism and democracy. They only wanted to work in rice paddies without helicopters strafing them and bombs with napalm burning their villages and tearing their country apart. They practiced the art of survival by siding with whatever military force was present at a particular time, be it Viet Cong, North Vietnamese or American.

The Cost Of Hamburger Hills

We fought using weapons against "oriental human beings," with quotation marks around that, which I do not believe this country would dream of using were we fighting in the European theatre. We watched while men charged up hills because a General said that hill had to be taken, and after losing one platoon or two platoons they marched away to leave the hill for reoccupation by the North Vietnamese. We watched pride allow the most unimportant of battles to be blown into extravaganzas because we couldn't lose and we couldn't retreat and because it didn't matter how many American bodies were lost and so there were Hamburger Hills and Khe Sanhs and Hill 881s and Fire Base 6s. Now we are told that the men who fought there must watch quietly while American lives are lost so that we can exercise the incredible arrogance of Vietnamizing the Vietnamese.

We are here in Washington also to say that the problem of this war is not just a question of war and diplomacy. It is part and parcel of everything that we are trying as human beings to communicate to people in this country, the question of racism, which is rampant in the military, and the hypocrisy in our taking umbrage over the Geneva Convention and using that as a justification for continuation of the war when we are more guilty than any other body of violations of those Geneva Conventions, in the use of free fire zones, harassment and interdiction fire, search and destroy missions, the bombings, the torture of prisoners.

We are here also to ask, and to ask vehemently, where are the leaders of our country? We are here to ask where are McNamara, Rostow, Bundy, Gilpatric and so many others, where are they now that we, the men whom they sent off to war, have returned? These are commanders who have deserted their troops, and there is no more serious crime in the law of war. The Army says they never leave their wounded. The Marines say they never leave even their dead. These men have left all the casualties and retreated behind a pious shield of public rectitude. They have left their reputations bleaching behind them in the sun.

Finally, this Administration has done us the ultimate dishonor. They have attempted to disown us and the sacrifices we made for this country. In their blindness and fear they have tried to deny that we are veterans or that we served in 'Nam. We do not need their testimony. Our own scars and stumps of limbs are witness enough for others and for ourselves.

We wish that a merciful God could wipe away our own memories as easily as this Administration has wiped their memories of us. But all that they can do is to make more clear than ever our own determination to undertake one last mission, to search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last ten years, so that when years from now our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say "Vietnam" and not mean a desert, nor a filthy obscene memory, but instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped it in the turning.

*Before Senate Foreign Relations April 22 (*abr.*).

How We Treat The Heroes When They Come Home

The hospitals across the country won't or can't meet their demands. It is not a question of not trying, they haven't got the appropriations. A man recently died after he had a tracheotomy in California, not because of the operation but because there wasn't enough personnel to clean the mucous out of his tube and he suffocated to death.

Another young man died in a New York VA hospital the other day. A friend of mine was lying in a bed two beds away and tried to help him but he couldn't. He rang a bell and there was nobody there to service that man and so he died of convulsions.

Fifty-seven percent I understand of all those entering the VA hospitals talk about suicide. Some 27 percent have tried, and they try because they come back to this country and they have to face what they did in Vietnam and then they come back and find the indifference of a country that doesn't really care, that doesn't really care.

—Kerry of the VVAW testifying on April 22.

How Secretaries Of Defense Can Be Deceived And Top Generals Deceive Themselves

Sen. SYMINGTON: One final question, Mr. Kerry, from your experience in Vietnam do you think it is possible for the President or Congress to get accurate and undistorted information through official military channels.

[Shouts of "No" from the veterans in the audience.]

Mr. KERRY: I can recall often sending in on the spot reports which we made after each mission, and including the GDA, Gunfire Damage Assessments, in which we would say maybe 15 sampans sunk or whatever it was, and I often read about my own missions in Stars and Stripes and the very mission we had been on had been doubled in figures and tripled in figures. . . .

Men in the military, have a tendency as do men in many other things, to report what they want to report and see what they want to see . . . Secretary Laird came to Vietnam once and they staged an entire invasion for him . . . When the initial recon platoon went out and met with resistance they changed the entire operation the night before and sent them down into the South China Sea so they would not run into resistance and the Secretary would have a chance to see how smoothly the war was going.

I know General Wheeler came over at one point . . . and Gen. Wheeler went out to the field and saw 12 pacification leaders and asked about ten of them how things were going and they all said, "It is really going pretty badly," and the 11th one said, "It couldn't be better, General, we are really doing the thing here to win the war," and the General said, "I am finally glad to find somebody who knows what he is talking about." . . . I think the intelligence which finally reaches the White House does have serious problems with it . . . I served as an aide to an Admiral in my last days in the Navy and I have seen exactly what the response is up the chain of command, and how things get distorted and people say to the man above him what is needed to be said, to keep everybody happy.

—John Kerry, of the VVAW to Sen. For. Rel. April 22.

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The Slippery Record on Nixon's Promise of Total Withdrawal

Our goal is a total American withdrawal from Vietnam.
—*Nixon on TV April 7*

Q. Mr. Secretary, after the President's speech and after a White House conference, Senator Scott interpreted the President as saying that he does have a time-table for ending the war, that that time-table is sometime preceding December 1972, and he has no intention of having a residual force in South Vietnam. Is that your understanding?

Secretary LAIRD: I think the President's statement and speech speaks for itself.

Q. Would you enlarge on your own frequently promised course that you're going to terminate American involvement in the war, and tell us whether terminate means what the dictionary says it means.

LAIRD: It means exactly what the President said.

Q. What does it mean when you have used the term, sir?

LAIRD: Exactly the same as the President.

Q. Would you tell us what it means?

LAIRD: I would be glad to give you a copy of the President's speech.

Q. I am sorry, I heard that.

LAIRD: Whether it's "terminate" or a total withdrawal I am not going to quarrel about the difference in words.

Q. Can we get at it this way: Do you plan, a Korean-type solution in Vietnam, leaving X number of Americans there as a support force indefinitely, or do you plan to get them completely out, period?

LAIRD: I think the President made that very clear.

Q. What do you say, sir?

LAIRD: I support the President.

Q. I don't think that's an answer.

LAIRD: I think it is a pretty good answer and I will continue to support the President in his (speech) of April 7.

Q. Sir, he has never addressed himself on this question.

LAIRD: I think that anyone reading the speech would find the question is answered.

Q. I did read it and I listened to it . . . How can we end American involvement when it's implicit in the Vietnamization program that we continue military assistance?

LAIRD: Military assistance will take on important significance if we are going to reduce the commitment for American manpower as far as ground combat forces are concerned in that area of the world. Military assistance, yes; American ground troops, manpower, no. I certainly would not want to mislead anyone that we will not need military assistance programs as far as applying the Nixon Doctrine in Asia.

Q. What does Vietnamization and the Nixon Doctrine envision in terms if U.S. air support in Indochina after these troops are pulled out?

LAIRD: I would envision that the U.S. presence as far as Asia is concerned, as far as Naval forces are concerned, as far as Air Forces are concerned, that this would be part of the realistic deterrent which we will maintain in Asia.

Q. Do you envision those air and naval units remaining in combat in carrying out that role?

LAIRD: I wouldn't care to discuss that particular question. I look forward to the reduction of warfare in that area of the world and I do not believe that we should look forward to the maintenance of that kind of warfare. We must maintain a capability, however, in order to be realistic about the situation that we do face there, and in order to restore peace and to maintain peace in that area.

—*Press conference at the Pentagon April 13 (abridged).*

Emmett DUDMAN (Chicago Sun Times): Mr. President you mentioned ending our involvement in the war in Vietnam and yet the Secretary of Defense said the other day that we would remain in South Vietnam (sic). How do you reconcile these two statements or is there a conflict there in your opinion?

The PRESIDENT: No. Mr. Dudman, there really isn't any conflict . . . I said that we would end our involvement . . . I said that our goal is total American withdrawal from Vietnam . . . As far as Mr. Laird's statement was concerned, what he was referring to was that pending the time that we can have a total withdrawal consistent with the principles that I laid down last week, it will be necessary to the U.S. to retain air power and to retain some residual forces. . . .

Eugene V. RISHER (UPI): Mr. President, I would like to follow up on this. Does that mean that if Hanoi agreed to release the American prisoners, that we would shut down the five air bases that we have in Thailand, as part of the withdrawal?

The PRESIDENT: Mr. Risher, the air bases that we have in an area around Vietnam, of course, are there for reasons other than Vietnam. As you know, we have a treaty with Thailand and these air bases are maintained there, in part, in order to sustain that treaty.

—*American Society of Newspaper Editors April 16.*

Fifteen Or 20 Years More

I implemented a plan to train and equip the South Vietnamese; to withdraw American forces, and to end American involvement in the war just as soon as the South Vietnamese had developed the capacity to defend their country against Communist aggression.

—*Nixon's address of April 7.*

The Vietnamization plan is not completed yet, so we still have many things to do not only in the military field but in other fields, socially, politically and economically. So if Vietnamization means making South Vietnam strong, capable to defend itself, it will take 15 or 20 more years.

—*Vice President Ky at an impromptu news conference in Saigon at which he also said that if Senator McGovern came to Vietnam "I will kick him out personally." AP in* Baltimore Sun, *April 19. (The same day the* New York Daily News *Saigon correspondent Joseph Fried quoted Ky as terming a military victory and invasion of the North impossible and saying, "both parts of Vietnam must stop the war . . . We are not going to fight and kill each other forever."*

Nixon's Tricky Final Reply Was Undercut By Thailand's Foreign Minister

Bangkok, Thailand—Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman said today that if the United States wants to keep forces in Thailand after the Vietnam war, a new treaty will be needed. Thanat was commenting on President Nixon's remarks that some American forces must remain in Southeast Asia after the war and on Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird's comment that a U.S. air and naval presence would be maintained in Southeast Asia.

Thanat said that, according to the present Thai-American treaty, U.S. forces are to stay in Thailand only for the duration of the war. He said American troops here have only a supporting role in the Vietnam war. The United States has reduced the number of its troops in Thailand from a peak of 50,000 three years ago to about 32,000 at the present. Thanat spoke at an airport interview before leaving for Washington to attend the Vietnam allies conference later this week.

—*AP in the* Washington Star, *April 19.*

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If We're Wooing China, Why Go On Fighting A War Of Containment?

(Continued From Page One)

Cathedral organized by the Concerned Officers movement and the march of the 24th itself.

A Scene For The History Books

Just as the relative handful of the Resistance saved the honor of France so these thousand or more veterans of Vietnam will some day be seen as men who saved the honor of America. Think of how differently Germany would have gone into the Nuremberg trials if it could have pointed to demonstrations in which German veterans had cared or dared to throw away their medals in shame and protest while the very horrors of World War II were still going on! I know of no war and no country in which there has ever been such a scene as that which took place on the West side of the Capitol that morning. It will be remembered with pride in our history books.

"We looked for leadership," said the ex-officer who opened the medal ceremony, "but found closed doors and closed minds." The Armed Services Committees, always the faithful satellites of the high brass, refused to hear them. But Senator McGovern held an improvised session that afternoon to hear a succession of the veterans tell of the atrocities and the atrocious military tactics which had finally turned them off the war. And Senator Fulbright had the distinction of being the only committee chairman in Congress to hold an official session to hear a spokesman for the veterans, a 27-year old Naval Lt, j.g., from Waltham, Mass., named John Forbes Kerry. His testimony, from which we give many excerpts in this issue, was the most moving and eloquent we have heard in 30 years as a Washington correspondent. He spoke with a firmness, a tact and a grace that made the Senators seem elderly fumblers. The veterans have given the peace movement a fresh voice.

As this is written the second wave of protests has begun under the Peoples Coalition For Peace and Justice. The bold slogan is to shut down the government if it does not shut down the war. No one aware of the terrible immobility of the government can fail to have some sympathy with this effort. But it remains to be seen whether the Peoples Coalition has the troops. There were not more than 1500 here at the start of what was billed as a major exercise in massive but peaceful civil disobedience in the Gandhi tradition. In all this anti-war theatre perhaps the pantomime which most undercuts the war is Nixon's sudden honeymoon with Chou En-lai. The containment of China is what it's been all about for two decades since we began to pour out first treasure and then blood in Southeast Asia. Hanoi was Peking's tool, and we had to stop those hordes in Vietnam or fight them—remember?—on the beaches of California. What was billed as the Asiatic Armageddon now dissolves into a Ping Pong tournament. So why go on with the killing? What's left of the war but inertia? Yet I have a terrible fear that if Nixon can pull off another rigged election in Saigon next October and keep Thieu in power with minimum cost the country may forget what we are doing in Southeast Asia as easily as it forgets what we have done in Greece. There the controlled press and TV are playing up congratulatory messages from Nixon and Secretary of Commerce Stans on the fourth anniversary of the dictatorship we helped to impose on the very cradle of freedom. And who cares? As nobody would have cared about Vietnam either if it hadn't been made too painful and costly to bear. *April 26*

The Fake Issue Of Freedom

Each day to facilitate the process by which the U.S. washes her hands of Vietnam someone has to give up his life so that the U.S. doesn't have to admit something that the entire world already knows, so that we can't say that we have made a mistake. Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, "the first President to lose a war."

We are asking Americans to think about that because how do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? If you read carefully the President's last speech to the people of this country, you can see that he says clearly, "but the issue, gentlemen, is communism, and the question is whether or not we will leave that country to the Communists or whether we will try to give it hope to be a free people." But the point is they are not a free people now under us, and we cannot fight Communism all over the world, and I think we should have learned that lesson by now.

—John Kerry of the VVAW testifying April 22 (abr)

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